

Reign of Terror

- The Reign of Terror was a dark and violent period of time during the French Revolution.
- Radicals took control of the revolutionary government. They arrested and executed anyone who they suspected might not be loyal to the revolution.
- The French Revolution had begun four years earlier with the Storming of the Bastille. Since then, the government had been in a constant state of change.
- By 1793, the revolutionary government was in crisis. France was being attacked by foreign countries on all sides and civil war was breaking out in many regions.
- Radicals led by Maximilien Robespierre took over the government and started the Reign of Terror.
- The Reign of Terror began on September 5, 1793 with a declaration by Robespierre that Terror would be "the order of the day." It ended on July 27, 1794 when Robespierre was removed from power and executed.
- France was ruled by a group of men called the Committee of Public Safety. The leader of this group was a man named Robespierre. Robespierre was also the leader of a radical group called the Jacobins. The Jacobins felt that it was their duty to preserve the revolution, even if it meant violence and terror.
- The Committee of Public Safety introduced several new laws. They wanted to make "Terror" an official government policy.
- One of these laws was called the "Law of Suspects." This law said that anyone who was even suspected as an enemy of the revolution was to be arrested. They created a court called the Revolutionary Tribunal for the trial of their political enemies.
 - At one point, the court could only determine two verdicts: the accused was either 1) innocent, or 2) was put to death.
- Throughout the next year, France was ruled by the Terror. People had to be careful of everything they said, what they did, and who they talked to. The slightest hint of opposition to the revolutionary government could mean prison or even death.
- Sometimes revolutionaries accused people they didn't like or wanted to get rid of without any evidence. All anyone had to do was accuse someone, and they were considered guilty.
- Around 17,000 people were officially executed in France, including 2,639 in Paris. Many more died in prison or were beaten to death in the streets. Over 200,000 people were arrested.
- As the bloodshed and executions of the Terror became worse, many people realized that it could not continue. Enemies of Robespierre organized to overthrow him.
- On July 27, 1794, he was removed from power and the Reign of Terror was over. He was executed the next day.
- The guillotine was a device used to execute people during the Terror.
- At one point during the Terror, the Committee of Public Safety eliminated the right to a public trial and a lawyer for people suspected of treason.
- Queen Marie Antoinette was one of the first people executed during the Terror.
- The Committee of Public Safety created a new calendar and a new state religion called the Cult of the Supreme Being. They suppressed Christianity and even executed a group of nuns who refused to renounce their faith.